

Latins people from the ancient country of Latium, an area in what is now the country of Italy

Palatine one of the seven hills in ancient Rome

### 32.2 The Early Romans and Their Neighbors

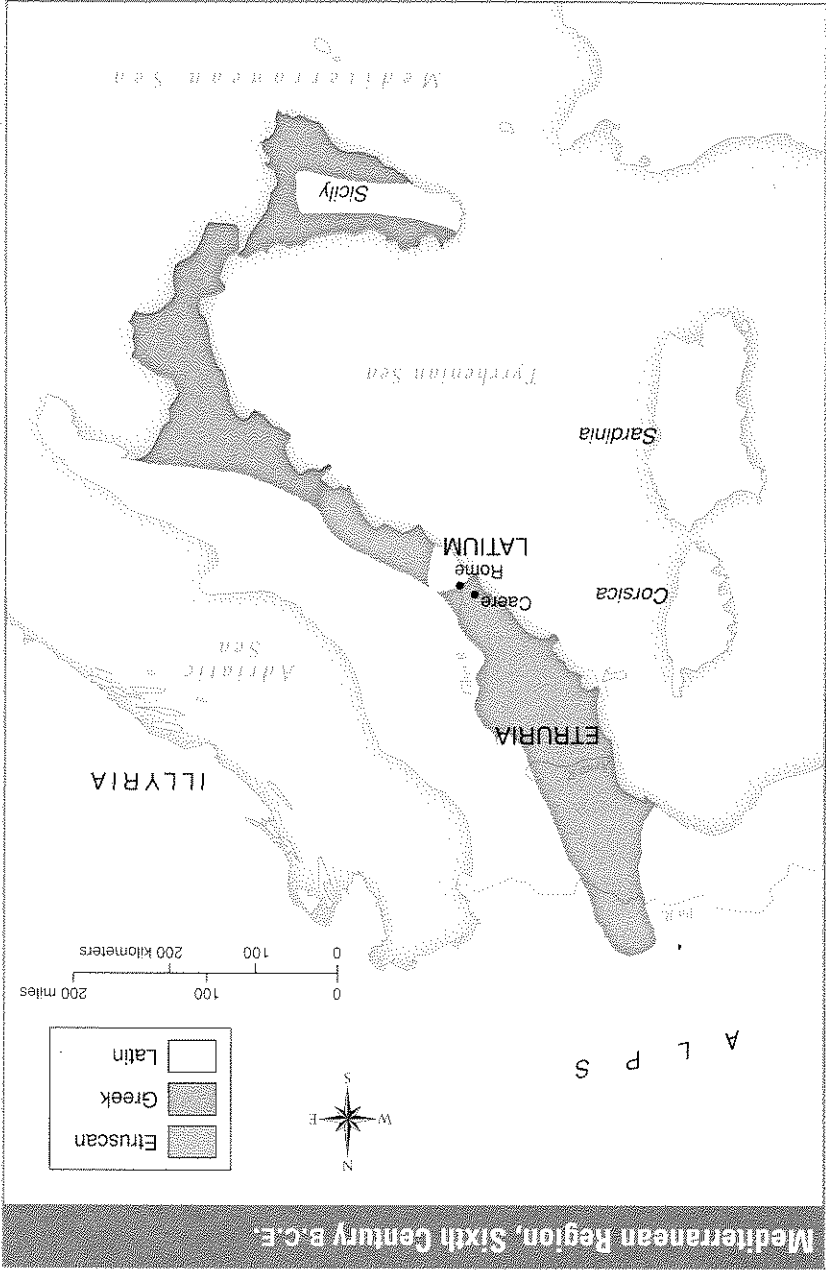
Over the years, historians have tried to discover the truth about the founding of Rome. No one really knows who Rome's first king was. We do know that the first Romans were Latins. The Latins were one of several groups who had invaded Italy some time before 1000 B.C.E.

Perhaps around 700 B.C.E., a Latin tribe built the village that eventually became Rome. They built their village on the Palatine, a hill in central Italy. The Palatine overlooks the Tiber River, about 12 miles inland from the sea. In time, the village of thatched huts grew into a mighty city that spread over seven hills.

As Rome grew, Roman culture was greatly influenced by two of Rome's neighbors, the Etruscans and the Greeks. The Romans borrowed many ideas and skills from these two groups, beginning with the Etruscans.

The Etruscans had dominated Etruria, a land just north of the Palatine, about 800 B.C.E. No one knows exactly where they came from. They built some city-states and conquered others. By 600 B.C.E., they ruled much of northern and central Italy, including the town of Rome.

The Greeks also had a major influence on Roman culture. The Romans learned about Greek culture when Greek colonists established towns in southern Italy and on the island of Sicily. Romans also learned about Greek ways from traders and the many Greeks who came to Rome. Let's look at some of the ideas and customs the Romans learned from these two groups.



### 32.3 The Influence of Etruscan Engineering

The Romans became great builders. They learned many techniques about engineering, or the science of building, from the Etruscans. Two important Etruscan structures the Romans borrowed were the arch and the cuniculus.

Etruscan arches rested on two pillars. The pillars supported a half-circle of wedge-shaped stones. A keystone in the center held the stones in place. The cuniculus was a long underground trench. Vertical shafts connected it to the ground above.

Etruscans used these trenches to irrigate land. They also used them to drain swamps and to carry water to their cities. The Romans adopted both of these structures. In time, they became even better engineers than the Etruscans. They used arches to build huge public works, including bridges, stadiums, and aqueducts.

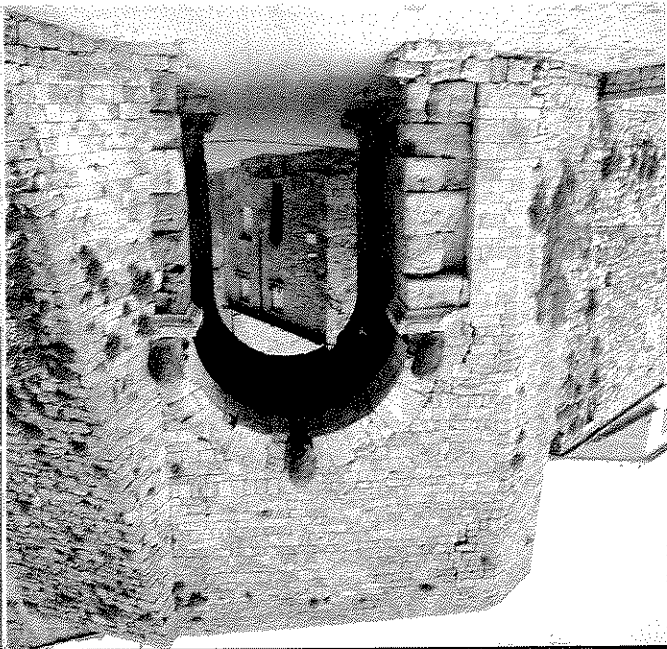
### 32.4 The Influence of Etruscan Sporting Events

Romans also adopted two bloody Etruscan sporting events. The first was slave fighting. The Etruscan custom was to stage slave fights during funerals. Two slaves of the dead master fought to the death with swords and small shields. After being congratulated, the winner was executed.

The Etruscans also enjoyed watching chariot races. The drivers, or charioteers, were strapped to their chariots. If a chariot overturned, a driver could be dragged under the chariot's wheels or killed racing around the turns in the track of a chariot race.

cuniculus an irrigation system invented by the Etruscans to fight another person to the death for public entertainment

This arched city gate was built by the Etruscans. The arch is held in place by the pressure of the stones against each other.



These Etruscan sports became popular amusements in Rome. In Roman stadiums, thousands of slaves died fighting as gladiators. The gladiators fought against each other or wild animals. And Romans flocked to see charioteers risk their lives racing four-horse teams.

